United Nations E/CONF.93/L.5

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
24 November 2000
English
Original: Spanish

Seventh United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas
New York, 22-26 January 2001
Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Reports on achievements in surveying, mapping, and charting in addressing national, subregional and global issues, including policy and institutional issues

Statement by the President of the Simon Bolivar Geographical Institute of Venezuela: Institutional Aspects

Report submitted by Venezuela**

With the recent passage of the National Geography, Mapping and Land Registry Act promulgated by the President of the Republic on 28 July 2000 (see Official Gazette No. 37.002), the Simon Bolivar Geographical Institute of Venezuela was established under the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources.

The regulations pertaining to geography and mapping contained in the Act have filled a gap in our legal system. Although those intersectoral and ongoing functions are one of the foundations for the State's other activities, until now there was no body of rules defining and giving legal effect to the methods and procedures through which the State achieves its objectives.

In matters pertaining to land registration, the Act unifies, updates and strengthens the existing regulations which had been scattered in various Acts — rural land registration in the Vacant and Common Lands Act (1936) and the Agrarian Reform Act (1960), urban land registration in the Organic Law on the Municipal Regime. This separation made it difficult to carry out a complete and definitive land registration programme. The activities carried out by the competent bodies were isolated and resulted in a preliminary or initial land registry and there was no possibility of arriving at a clear title, since the relationship between the physical aspects of the land registry and the Public Registry had not been legally established. The National Geography, Mapping and Land Registration Act solves this problem.

* E/CONF.93/1.

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The legal instrument will allow the Government, among other things, to: know the extent of its territorial assets; execute agricultural, industrial and housing development plans in an orderly manner and with full legal certainty; recognize and protect collectively owned lands of indigenous peoples; and provide legal certainty for both public and private property. As the governing body with national jurisdiction, the Simon Bolivar Geographical Institute of Venezuela will be responsible for setting policy and designing plans and programmes to promote the formation of a high-quality geospatial information system, in order to make available, at all times, up-to-date knowledge about the country's geography.

With regard to the establishment and maintenance of the national land registry, close coordination will be maintained with the municipalities; the latter will conduct that activity following guidelines and technical standards established by the Institute.

Completion of mapping in the south, establishment of a national geospatial database, a national land registry system, a national remote sensing centre and participation in the demarcation of indigenous lands are some of the goals which the new Simon Bolivar Geographical Institute of Venezuela is aiming to achieve.